



# **Your Probationary License**

**Questions & Answers**

### *What is the probationary licensing program?*

The probationary licensing program is a way for the Secretary of State to monitor the driving performance of new drivers. **All new drivers are on probation for at least three years** while they gain experience. Being on probation does not affect your driving privileges. It does, however, identify you as a beginning driver.

### *What is graduated driver licensing and how is it affected by probation?*

Graduated driver licensing is a program that integrates education and experience for young drivers.

Your graduated driver license reduces your risk by limiting driving privileges while you gain experience. The probationary program monitors your driving record and allows the Secretary of State to help you improve if you drive unsafely.

Graduated driver licensing and probation work together to control your driving risk.

Violations or crashes posted to your record show you are not progressing satisfactorily and the Secretary of State may further restrict or even suspend your driving privileges, no matter what your licensing level is!

### *Does the Secretary of State know if I have been driving unsafely?*

**Yes! Unsafe drivers are identified by the number of “unsafe driving events” (traffic violations and crashes) posted on their driving records.** Any time you are convicted of a traffic violation or have a traffic crash, the Secretary of State is notified of the violation by the court and records it on your driving record.

The Secretary of State constantly reviews the records of probationary drivers because they are at higher risk of having a crash than most groups of drivers.

### *What will happen to my driving privilege if I drive unsafely?*

**The Secretary of State will contact you** if you are in a traffic crash or receive a traffic conviction.

You may receive self-study material to complete and return to the Secretary of State. You may be required to come to the Driver Assessment office at a branch office for a personal review of your driving performance.

A driving record that shows unsafe driving behavior will definitely be cause for a personal review, which is called a Driver Assessment reexamination. Examples of unsafe driving include speeding convictions, stop sign violations and crashes.

At this review, your driving privilege may be restricted (limiting your full driving privilege), or a suspension may be ordered stating you are not to drive for any reason. You may also be given a combination of restrictions and suspension.

*Your parents or legal guardians must also be notified if you violate the driving privileges of your graduated driver license. Violating your graduated driver license restrictions is also cause for a Driver Assessment reexamination, and your driving privileges may be suspended.*

### *How long will I be on probation?*

**At least three-years.** It may last longer than three years if you continue to drive unsafely.

To end your probationary period and become a post-probationary driver, you must drive the last 10 months of your probationary period without having an “at fault” or “had-been-drinking” crash, a driver license suspension, or a traffic conviction.

For example: If you drive two years and 10 months of your three-year probationary period without a crash or traffic conviction and then you receive a speeding ticket (no matter how fast you were driving over the posted limit), your probationary period will be automatically extended until you demonstrate you can drive **10 consecutive months without a ticket, crash or license suspension.**

### *Must I wear a safety belt?*

**Yes, and for good reason!** Since 1985 all front-seat occupants in Michigan have been **required by law** to wear a safety belt. All youth under age 16, whether in the front or back seat, must wear a safety belt. All toddlers and infants under age four must be buckled in an approved child safety seat, no matter where they are seated in the vehicle. The safest place for a child is always in the middle of the back seat.

The law allows police officers to stop a motorist solely for not wearing a safety belt in the front seat of a vehicle. Police officers may also stop a motorist if a child under age 16 is not properly restrained, no matter where they are riding in a vehicle.

Michigan’s safety belt and child safety passenger laws have helped reduce the number of deaths and crippling injuries on our state’s roads. Always wear your safety belt whether you are the driver or a passenger.

## *How do the most recent drug and alcohol laws affect me?*

In several ways! Most of the alcohol laws relating to “zero tolerance” or “minor in possession” carry a requirement that a driver license be **suspended upon conviction**. This suspension not only may cause you inconvenience, but can result in more expensive automobile insurance premiums and extensions to your probationary license period.

Learning to drive safely is a full-time activity, and combining the use of alcohol or drugs greatly increases the risk to your safety and that of others. Therefore, penalties are severe. Do not risk a crash or loss of your driving privileges; do not drive when using drugs or alcohol.

## *Reducing your crash risk*

Keep in mind that driving is not only a privilege, but also a large responsibility. You can reduce your risk of being involved in a crash by keeping your mind on the task at hand: driving. Safety experts estimate as many as half of all vehicle crashes are due to driver distraction.

Distraction can come in many forms. Changing the radio station, talking to passengers, eating, or talking on a cell phone are all examples of distractions that take the driver’s focus away from driving.

Teen drivers are especially vulnerable to distractions due to their inexperience. For your safety, and the safety of other motorists, exercise good judgement and don’t let other activities divert your attention from the road.

If you have questions about your probationary license or need additional information about your graduated license, contact the nearest Secretary of State branch office.

If you prefer, you may write to:

Michigan Department of State  
Driver Assessment Section  
P.O. Box 30640  
Lansing, MI 48909

## **DISABILITY ACCESS:**

The Secretary of State complies with the standards established by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If you need accommodations, please telephone (517) 322-1166 or TYY (517) 322-1477.

